

PEACE EDUCATION: CONCEPTUAL AWARENESS OF TEACHERS AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

Peace has always been one of the basic needs of human beings and yet it has been so elusive. Despite phenomenal progress in every domain of individual and collective life, man has not been able to find lasting peace, with himself and with others around the globe. With the invention of weapons of mass destruction and relentless arms race amid hovering conflicts among groups and states, the need for peace and peace education has increased manifold. Peace education is a process of achieving peace, at personal, inter-personal, national and international levels, through education, focusing on promoting universal brotherhood, fraternity global citizenship and the culture of peaceful co-existence. Therefore, this research study has been exclusively based on the formal mode of peace education. And the area under investigation was "Conceptual Awareness of teachers about peace education at Elementary level". Questionnaire was used to collect data. Validity and reliability of the research tool was properly ensured. The questionnaire was distributed among respondents. Data collected from respondents was subsequently organized and analyzed through SPSS version 16. Only one aspect of peace education was measured (knowledge).

KEYWORDS: Peace Education, Knowledge, Skills, Attitude, Elementary Teachers

INTRODUCTION

Peace refers to freedom from war and civil disorder, resulting in tranquility of mind. And peace education is promotion of knowledge, attitudes, skills and way of life to gain and keep up this mental quiet. Individuals in the present post-modern world are continually facing tension and trouble- economic, political, social and ethical. Clash of civilizations, ethnic-strife and socio-economic upheavals are out to push humanity on the verge of extinction. At this 'hard times', revival of a culture of peace is the need of the hour. Peace education at school level can go a long way in promoting order in the trouble-torn society of today (Chakraborty & Islam, 2013).

The dawn of the 21th century, or more precisely the decade from 2001 to 2010, is declared as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace. However, the Stockholm International Peace Research (2002) identified that the world possesses 7150 nuclear warheads and nearly 36,800 potential nuclear warheads that has posed a very serious threat to the survival of mankind. Even though this war-stricken gloomy picture of the world is only one side of the coin and there is much to be optimistic about, particularly the ever-growing realization by peoples regarding the indispensability of peace in a world which has well and truly become a global village under the impact of numerous dynamics. In the view of Harris and Morrison (2003) peace "implies human beings working together to resolve conflicts, respect standards of justice, satisfy basic needs, and human rights". Peace education is a process whereby people learn about the dangers of violence, develop their capacities to counter violence and build sustainable peace in their communities (Srinivasan, 2009).

Peace is not just a society without weapons or just an absence of war, peace is something far beyond that; an environment in which all humans can enjoy the highest level of inner peace. Peace Education "...is not only rooted in building peace with one self, but it also interconnects and interrelates with every issue of life" (Bull, 2000). Peace Education is not only concerned with the content of teaching but also the form and structure within which teaching takes place. Objective of this study was to investigate the conceptual knowledge of elementary teachers regarding Peace Education.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The etymology of the word, 'peace' reveals that it is a derivation of the Latin word 'pax' which means a pact, contrast, an agreement to end the war or any dispute and conflict between two people, two nations or two antagonistic group of people (Khemananda, 1996). According to Oxford Learner's Dictionary, "A situation or a period of time in which there is no war or violence in a country or an area is peace. The state of being calm or quite and the state of living in friendship with somebody without arguing is called peace", (Oxford Learner's Dictionary, 7th Ed. 2007). Peace researchers believe that peace is the behavior that promotes harmony in the peoples' talking, listening and in the process of their interaction; such behavior discourages violent actions e.g. to hurt, destroy or harm one another, (Theresa and Gwendolyn, 1995, Cited by UNESCO, 2001). Harris and Synott (2002) describe peace education as a series of teaching encounters that draw from people their desire for peace, non-violent alternatives for managing conflicts and skills for critical analysis of structural arrangements that produce and legitimize injustice and inequality. Ajala (2003) defines peace education as the type of education that impacts in learners all norms, values and attitudes that can bring about a conducive environment for human living. Peace Education aims to help students acquire skills for non-violent conflict resolution and to reinforce these skills for active and responsible action in the society for the promotion of the values of peace.

Peace education, often referred to as conflict resolution education, has its origins in the ideas of Comenius and Erasmus. Peace education is both a philosophy and a process inclusive of skills, attitudes and knowledge to create a safe world, to build a sustainable environment and to bring social change (Harris & Morrison, 2003). Peace education can be considered as the attempt to provide values education and social skills that would reinforce positive group interactions among vastly different cultures and countries (Gutek, 2006). Peace education is a unifying and comprehensive concept that seeks to promote a holistic view of education. However, its relevance is inextricably part of and is highly dependent on contextual specificity. UNESCO literature states that Peace Education is more effective and meaningful when adopted according to the social and cultural context and the needs of a country. It should be enriched by its cultural and spiritual values together with the universal human values. It should also be globally relevant. Given such a framework, it is hard to find a universally accepted definition. Castro & Galace, (2010) discussed the following components of knowledge regarding peace education

Holistic Concept of Peace: Peace is not just the absence of direct/physical violence but also the presence of conditions of well being, cooperation and just relationship in the human and ecological spheres.

Conflict and Violence: Conflicts are a natural part of person's social life, but they become problems of violence depending on the methods of conflict resolution used.

Disarmament: Learners can be introduced to the goal of abolishing war and reducing global armed forces and armaments.

Nonviolence: Learners can be introduced the philosophical and spiritual underpinnings of nonviolence as well as its efficacy as a method to effect change. Moreover the cases of individuals and groups who have advocated nonviolence as a philosophy and method can be examined.

Conflict Resolution, Transformation and Prevention: Students can study the effective ways of resolving conflicts nonviolently (e.g collaborative problem solving) and how these can be applied into their lives. They can move on to examine how a conflict that has been resolved can be transformed into a situation that is more desirable.

Human Solidarity: Many commonalities bind together divergent religious, cultural, local and national groups. All humans have common basic needs and aspirations and a shared membership in an interdependent human/global community. Students can look at how to increase inter-religious, intercultural and inter-group trust, empathy, respect and cooperation, as well as discourage stereotyping and prejudices.

Development Based on Justice: Learners need to understand that development is not economic growth alone but also the equitable sharing of its fruits.

Democratization: It is important for learners to understand that democracy provides the environment within which people's fundamental rights, interests and wishes are respected.

Sustainable Development: Learners need to understand the interdependent relationship between humans and the natural environment and understand the changes that are necessary to ensure the well being of the earth's echo systems such that it can continue to meet future and present needs.

Reardon (1988) after an intensive analysis of peace education identified nine main areas that are covered by peace education. The major areas, that she has emphasized upon are: conflict resolution, cooperation, non-violence, multicultural understanding, human rights, social justice, world resources and global environment. These areas cover the three main ingredients of human personality, that is, the cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral components and these three components seem lacking in today's human society. Despite the commitment of the UN since its very inception to 'protect succeeding generations from the scourge of war', the world today is in greater danger of annihilation due to nuclear disasters, whether accidental or caused by man deliberately. Structural and overt conflicts are prevalent in most parts of the world. However, it is encouraging that the need of, and attention to peace, and peace education is gaining momentum. Peace education has emerged as a distinct field of study. This is because over the past two decades peace education is supportive of the efforts that lead to reconciliation, conflict prevention, as well as peace building (Seitz, 2004).

METHODOLOGY

The nature of the study was descriptive as it was concerned with the existing status of the subject under investigation. A multiple choice questionnaire was developed and every statement was followed by three statements. The respondents were given the option to choose the one that best validate the main statement in their opinion, exploring the conceptual awareness of respondents about peace education. Due to limited time and the expended nature of the investigation the study was delimited to the Elementary Teachers of public sector in a District. The validity and reliability of the research tool was sufficiently ensured. The data collected through questionnaire was properly organized, tabulated, analyzed and interpreted by SPSS.

ANALYSIS

Table 1: Knowledge of Teachers about Peace Education at Elementary School Level

S. No.	Indicators	N	Right Answer (%)	Wrong Answer (%)	Remarks
1	Holistic Concept of Peace Education	346	51%	49%	UN
2	Development based on justice	346	41%	59%	NA
3	Sustainable development	346	57%	43%	A
4	Human Solidarity	346	36%	64%	NA
5	Nonviolence	346	53%	47%	UN
6	Democratization	346	59%	41%	A
7	Disarmament	346	44%	56%	NA

The data represented in table shows that 49% of the participants responded wrongly and 51% of the respondents opted right statement. It can be concluded that participants were not clearly aware about the holistic concept of Peace Education. 59% of the participants responded to the wrong statement and 41% of the participants responded to right statement. So it can be concluded that greater majority of the respondents were not aware with the concept of development based on justice. 43% of the participants responded to wrong statement and 57% of the participants responded to right statement.

So it can be concluded that participants were aware with the concept of sustainable development. 64% of the participants responded to the wrong statement and 36% of the participants responded right to the statement. So it can be concluded that majority of the respondents were not aware with the concept of human solidarity. 47% of the participants responded to the wrong statement and 53% of the participants responded to the right statement. So it can be concluded that participants were aware about the concept of nonviolence. 41% of the participants responded to wrong statement and 59% of the participants responded to the right statement.

So it can be concluded that majority of the participants were aware about the concept of democratization. 56% of the participants responded to the wrong statement and 44% of the participants responded to right statement. So it can be concluded that majority of the participants were not aware with the concept of disarmament.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- All formal, informal, and non-formal modes of education may be structured by the Government on the philosophy of peace and peace education.
- An overall campaign for bringing about awareness about peace education and developing positive attitude towards peace education may be carried out. This can be undertaken with the help of print and electronic media, debates, public speeches, conferences and seminars.
- A Peace Education University may be established by the United Nations Organization in each third world country
- Peace education as a discipline and as a subject may be incorporated in the mainstream education system and be made a compulsory part of the course syllabus at every stage of the educative process.
- Necessary changes be incorporated in the curriculum/syllabus of teacher training programmes.

- Teachers, as well as, students may be imparted training in peace-promoting skills, and in peace education. Such trainings may equip the trainee with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes compendium of peace education.

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